A MIMECAST CASE STUDY

GOLD FIELDS GHANA – MIMECAST CASE STUDY:

GOLD FIELDS GHANA BRINGS THE CLOUD DOWN TO EARTH


Gold Fields is one of the world’s largest unhedged producers of gold with attributable production of 3.6 million ounces* per annum from nine operating mines in South Africa, Ghana, Australia and Peru. Gold Fields is listed on JSE Limited (primary listing), the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), the Dubai International Financial Exchange (DIFX), the Euronext in Brussels (NYX) and the Swiss Exchange (SWX).

A Tale of two mines

Gold Fields Ghana (GFG) is the Ghanaian operation of Gold Fields Limited. The operation’s head office is in Accra, the capital, and it has two operating mines (the group has seven more, in South Africa, Australia and Peru.)

GFG’s first mine, Tarkwa Gold Mine, lies 300 km west of Accra, with established road and telecommunications infrastructure. It has 1 805 permanent employees, 44 temporary staff and 2 846 contractors. For its part, Damang Gold Mine is situated 30 km north of the Tarkwa operation, also has good infrastructure, and has 320 permanent employees and 1 276 contractors in service.

...with two different setups

Steve Larbi, group IT manager for GFG, says the three sites are interconnected. Prior to the Mimecast engagement, the operation ran two different email setups, hosted on-site at Tarkwa and Damang (supplied, respectively, by VisNetic and MDaemon). Low employee numbers at the GFG head office resulted in an unusual group email architecture, involving head office staff remotely accessing the mine servers.

“Gold Fields inherited this heterogeneous setup, having acquired two separate mining operations,” Larbi clarifies.

He adds that Gold Fields used the built-in antispam and antivirus protection of both systems.

Standardise and cut out spam

Larbi says email is a widely-used, mission-critical tool at the mines. About 400 staff at Tarkwa and another 100 at Damang use it often in the execution of administrative duties.

Given the importance of email to the organisation, it made a decision in July 2008 to standardise on Exchange 2003. Having also suffered “a fair amount” of spam under the previous mail regime, it assigned Mimecast to the problem.

Redundancy

Hosted in South Africa and two other global locations, Mimecast has triple redundancy built into its network, offering carrier-grade security, reliability and availability. In this setup, mail passes through its servers, is cleansed of spam and viruses, and delivered to the Gold Fields Exchange Server.

The Mimecast services are delivered from world class data centre facilities that have been selected for a number of reasons including the ability to continue operating regardless of the problem be it a single component failure, total server outage or even an entire facility breakdown. Mimecast provides tight integration into the email server to provide seamless and secure failover and fallback with no loss of data or service. In the event of an email server outage, employees can continue to work uninterrupted within Outlook or webmail. Due to the services being delivered before the Goldfields Ghana network perimeter additional benefits have been realised such as reduced bandwidth constraints and consistent policy application regardless of physical location.

Mimecast’s state-of-the-art connection-based spam filtering through the use of Mimecast Global Reputation Service has proven effective for Goldfields Ghana.
Larbi says the solution brought about a drastic reduction in spam. “There have certainly not been any user complaints since then, and no false positives.”

He says Gold Fields has fully-redundant Web-based access and remote administration rights. “We’ve not encountered any problems with the solution at all, but should we feel it necessary, we can log in with admin rights and, for example, release mails that have been quarantined or classified in error as spam.”

For the record: Archiving

The mining operation also took on Mimecast’s archiving solution – another feature that benefits from the hosted solution architecture. “Because it is hosted off-site, automated archiving will just keep going, even if we lose our server. It’s fantastic to have server redundancy and disaster recovery taken care of.

In addition to spam filtering and archiving, Larbi finds the e-mail branding opportunities of Mimecast attractive. “We’re working on adopting that,” he says.

The one solution...

All in all, he says, the solution has had hitch-free implementation, responsive fly-in support, excellent functionality and outstanding value. “This is one solution I would market to other professionals in the industry.”

* Unhedged gold producers do not forward-sell their gold using derivatives